

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE:

A MULTIFAITH HERITAGE

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PREFACE FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE--A MULTI-FAITH HERITAGE

The B.C. Council for the Family is a non-denomination, multi-cultural organization which is dedicated to the well being of families in British Columbia. Our challenge is to cause a reawakening in today's society of the importance, the strengths, the joys and the responsibilities of the family. As part of our mandate a number of handbooks and manuals have been printed, foremost among them being the "Marriage Preparation Handbook," "New Parent Discussion Group Manual," "Parents of Toddlers" and "Parents of Teens" with several more in the printing stage.

Due to our multicultural makeup and the sensitivity of the subject any reference to religious beliefs and spirituality has been purposely avoided in these manuals in spite of the fact that in all cultures the spiritual nature of the union between man and woman is of primary significance both in their courtship and marriage as well as in the nurture and upbringing of their children.

In the hope of rectifying this omission and in order to obtain a better understanding of the role that spirituality has traditionally played in marriage and the family, we commissioned a study of this subject on a broad interfaith basis. We are pleased to present this volume as the end result of this study.

This is a first attempt at a very challenging assignment. We hope that it will be well received and also that it will encourage further discussion in the way of an ongoing dialogue on this universal and fundamental topic. Any and all thoughts, comments and suggestions for future publications will be welcomed.

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B. C. Council for the Family is a non-profit society, incorporated under the Societies Act of British Columbia on March 23, 1971. The main purpose of the Council is to strengthen family life in the province.

One of the activities of the Council is to publish educational materials designed to support healthy family living. In addition, the Council is engaged in program development, church, community and agency consultation, research and family program coordination.

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INTRODUCTION

Family life and religion address the meaning of our lives as human beings. This study explores the commonalities among religions in their interpretations of healthy family life.

Marriage and family in contemporary society have developed from past patterns and connections. Mobility and the cosmopolitan nature of Canada have brought into contact strangers whose systems of family differ greatly. A common reaction to these new experiences and observations is that "our" ways are right and "their" ways are wrong. At least there is recognition of the fact that there are other forms of family life, just as there are other forms of art, food and religion. Patterns of family life vary; no single form need be regarded as inevitable or more "natural" than any other.

The report is divided into four sections: Courtship, Ceremonies, Marriage and Family Life. We began with courtship as a logical place to step into the human life cycle. The choice of a life partner begins a new phase in the responsibilities of marriage and family. We examined some basic social preferences and restrictions in courtship based upon religion and custom. The descriptions of various marriage ceremonies is included to illustrate that marriage has historically required a formal ritual whether viewed as a social contract or a spiritual commitment. More importantly, perhaps, the descriptions of various ceremonies were included because we thought they were fun and represented the universal feelings of joy and

optimism that accompany weddings. The complexities of marriage: spirituality, love, equality, are distinguished from more prosaic requirements for marriage. The internal dynamics of relationships are reviewed in the sections on fidelity and responsibility, while human limitations are considered within the context of divorce and remarriage. Sexuality and intermarriage were omitted because of limits of time and space. The final section includes discussions on universal meanings and functions of family, the traditions of two representative, major religions and finally parental duties and rights as addressed by various religions.

This study which lays a foundation for further studies and projects presents a theoretical overview of literary, historical and theological sources. Future studies might address multi-cultural realities: how people, within their families, live their religions today.

The sources in our research included scriptures, theological dissertations, discussions by religious leaders and laypersons, studies of comparative religions, as well as tracts, booklets and articles written specifically for the guidance of persons of particular faiths. Articles and books on sociology, anthropology and historical development of various religions and philosophies we examined included contemporary social and philosophical commentators and thinkers. We are indebted to the many religious leaders and lay people in our community who took time to allow us to interview them, filled in our questionnaire, commented on our first rough draft and participated in a

multi-faith forum. The range of religious interpretation and philosophy is endless and we recognize that the spiritual ideals of many individual sects and peoples have been omitted. To those we apologize and hope that further studies will be broader and more inclusive.

Language, cultural differences and lack of expertise limited our understanding of various religions. We had to depend upon English translations and commentaries about Eastern religions and cultures. Hopefully long quotations allow the reader to acquire an actual "flavour" of the religion being discussed.

Families have the profound capacity to provide emotional strength, fostering in their members the most enjoyable, as well as the most painful, feelings of love and duty. Receiving and giving love are ultimately the most powerful universal aspects of family life. Each family member forms intimate personal relationships providing emotional security. This leads to an emotional strength which in turn provides a sense of purpose and meaning in one's life.

Human beings have always felt the need to understand their place within the scheme of things. Traditionally the family has transmitted religious beliefs and supported its members in finding a satisfying explanation to the nature of the world. We do not attempt to judge the extent to which individuals in any society are able to live up to their ideals or which religious perspectives are preferable. It is our hope that through studies such as this there will be a greater recognition of the unity of human beings and an increased

awareness and understanding of marriage and family life in its strength and richness.

COURTSHIP

Courtship varies in style and timing. The couple become acquainted and explore factors in a continuing relationship such as social background, character and physical appearance. This period is often characterized by romantic infatuation linked with an awakening adult sexuality. The traditional pattern of Amish courtship is described by John A. Hostetler in The Amish Family.

The usual age for courtship, called rumspringa (running around), begins for the boy at sixteen, and for the girl at fourteen to sixteen. Secrecy pervades the entire period of courtship and is seldom relaxed regardless of its length.

When Saturday evening comes, he dresses in his best; he makes little ado about his departure and attempts to leave the impression that he is going to town on business.

Before entering the home of his girl he makes sure that the "old folks" are in bed. Standard equipment for every young Amishman of courting age is a good flashlight. With his light focused on her window, the girl has the signal that her boy friend has arrived; she quietly goes downstairs to let him in. The couple may be together until the early morning hours in the home on such occasions.

Courting normally takes place in the kitchen or sitting room. The Amish feel that it is none of the "outsider's" business how their courting is conducted. The clatter of horses hoofs on hard-surface roads is evidence of lovers returning home in the early hours of the morning.

The old way of spending the time together was for a boy and girl to lie on the bed without undressing. The Amish have no uniform word in their speech for this practice, which to them, in earlier times was very ordinary. Bei-schlof (or with sleep) is a usage in one area. In English this behavior pattern is known as bundling, but the modern American society does not approve of this practice. It is little wonder that Amish persons in the most "nativistic" settlements, who are sometimes asked whether they bundle, do not know the meaning of "bundling." There seems to be a tendency for this form of courting to disappear among the Amish as their communities change, but it still prevails in some districts. Unfortunately the subject has been exploited by pamphleteers and story writers. The practice has been sharply condemned by some Amish ordained men and defended by others as something almost

sacred. Already in the nineteenth century new settlements had been started by those families who wanted to get away from the practice. Those communities that have assimilated most to the American society have felt the depreciating attitude of outsiders and tend thus to oppose the practice of bundling. Those which have retained their traditional culture most consistently have been least opposed. The practice has disappeared without argument in other areas with the influx of modern home conveniences (living-room suites, etc.), and with a wider range of social contact with the outside world.

Dating is an acceptable social activity for many religious groups although more conservative denominations consider dating to be acceptable only if it leads to marriage. In other faiths it is common for the family to participate in the selection of their children's marriage partner. In this case, the families are the first to become acquainted and it is they who decide if the marriage would be agreeable. The period of courtship between the couple may occur before or after the marriage ceremony.

After the period of acquaintancy and subsequent maturity each person takes a deeper and closer look at the other and appraises the depth of their own attachment. The individuals assess firstly their readiness for marriage and secondly the acceptability of the other as a prospective life partner. In cultures where the family plays a role in choosing their children's marriage partners, the family assumes the responsibility for assessing the readiness of the couple to undertake the responsibility of marriage. The following discussion in Marriage: East and West by David and Vera Mace illustrates the role of the family in arranging marriage in India.

"In our system, you see," she explained, "we girls don't have to worry at all. We know we'll get married. When we are old enough, our parents will find a suitable boy, and everything will be arranged. We don't have to go into competition with each other."

"Besides," said a third girl, "how would we be able to judge the character of a boy we met and got friendly with? We are young and inexperienced. Our parents are older and wiser, and they aren't as easily deceived as we would be. I'd far rather have my parents choose for me. It's so important that the man I marry should be the right one. I could so easily make a mistake if I had to find him for myself."

Another girl had her hand stretched out eagerly.

"But does the girl really have any choice in the West?" she said. "From what I've read, it seems that the boy does all the choosing. All the girl can do is to say yes or no. She can't go up to a boy and say 'I like you. Will you marry me?' can she?"

We admitted that this was not the done thing.

"So," she went on eagerly, "when you talk about men and women being equal in the West, it isn't true. When our parents are looking for a husband for us, they don't have to wait until some boy takes it into his head to ask for us. They just find out what families are looking for wives for their sons, and see whether one of the boys would be suitable. Then, if his family agree that it would be a good match, they arrange it together."

The couple (or their families) examines their personal maturity, integrity, spiritual values, life goals, marital responsibilities and the significance, to them, of their marriage vows.

To assist couples in their decisions many faiths offer pre-marital courses which emphasize communication skills. In other faiths the family and friends of the couple take on this counselling role. In both the "assisted" and the "choice" marriages there is recognition that marital harmony is based upon individual love heightened by the spiritual love between man, woman and God. In the assisted marriage the extended family harmony and management of joint property is of

greater importance than individual love.

The engagement or betrothal, the final stage of the dating and courtship process, occurs when the decision to be married is finalized by the families. In the case of the Baha'i faith, the engagement must not exceed ninety days. If the couple are not completely sure of their commitment at the end of this period, the engagement and subsequent marriage are cancelled. Hinduism and Judaism traditionally considered the betrothal to be legally binding. The public announcement to marry signifies a transition to a new role of adult responsibility.

Traditional guidelines often determine the suitability of a marriage partner and many religions impose limitations to curtail later pain and confrontation. Most religions prefer the couple to be of the same faith. This varies from a broad interpretation of faith such as Christianity to a more narrow interpretation by some faiths which require the couple to be of the same denomination or caste. The converse of the endogamous (same faith) marriage is held by the Baha'i's who recognize the source of all the world's divinely revealed religions as being one; therefore, from the Baha'i perspective, interfaith marriage is permissible (and can even promote understanding and unity) provided amity and concord exist between both the bride and groom and their parents.

Religions and cultures place kinship restrictions on prospective marriage partners because there exists a universal abhorrence of incest. The definition of incest, however, varies from faith to faith.

For example, in some religions a person may not marry closer than those with the same clan name at the distance of the four grandparents, while in other faiths first cousins may marry. The following are examples of kinship restrictions within the Anglican Church and Islam. Under Anglican Canon Law marriages between certain persons are forbidden:

A Man may not marry his

1. Mother
2. Step-mother
3. Mother-in-law
4. Daughter
5. Step-daughter
6. Daughter-in-law
7. Sister
8. Grandmother
9. Grandfather's wife
10. Wife's Grandmother
11. Grand-daughter
12. Wife's Grand-daughter
13. Grandson's Wife
14. Aunt
15. Niece

A Woman may not marry her

1. Father
2. Step-father
3. Father-in-law
4. Son
5. Step-son
6. Son-in-law
7. Brother
8. Grandfather
9. Grandmother's husband
10. Husband's Grandfather
11. Grandson
12. Husband's Grandson
13. Grand-daughter's Husband
14. Uncle
15. Nephew

From the Koran, Sura IV, 27.

Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your aunts, both on the father and mother's side, and your nieces on the brother and sister's side, and your foster-mothers, and your foster-sisters, and the mothers of your wives, and your step-daughters who are your wards, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in: (but if ye have not gone in unto them, it shall be no sin in you to marry them;) and the wives of your sons who proceed out of your loins; and ye may not have two sisters; except where it is already done. Verily, God is Indulgent, Merciful!

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CEREMONIES

Ceremonies to celebrate marriage are common to all faiths. Joy and optimism at weddings are universal, complimented by the prayers, vows and homilies disclosing the seriousness of the occasion. The wedding ceremony is a symbol of transition through the life cycle from youth to maturity.

The following descriptions depict the universality and contrast in formality and traditions.

The description of historic weddings comes from And the Bride Wore . . . by Ann Monsarrat.

And even for a Roman bride, the dress took second place to the accessories, most of which were loaded on her head. Yellow was the wedding colour then, and an all-enveloping flame-yellow veil a bride's chief insignia. This was pulled over her face during the ceremony "to shield the downcast looks of virgin modesty" and worn until she arrived at her new home on the night of the wedding, when it was the bridegroom's privilege to do the unveiling.

Under the veil she wore a garland of flowers (picked by herself), and under that, she had an elaborate coiffure which involved dividing the hair into six locks with a special spear-shaped comb. Her shoes were important too--they had to be saffron-coloured--and she usually carried in her hand three wheat ears (wheat being one of the many symbols of fertility). The dress in between all this finery lacked significance. It had to be vertically woven and tied with a woollen girdle, but tradition decreed no special colour. . . .

Weddings have always been considered a good excuse for a party. The Greeks looked upon theirs as sacrificial feasts to the household gods; but, whatever the name, the father of the bride was expected to pick up the bill. And, whatever the name, wedding cakes appeared on the menu. These began rather humbly--the Greeks baked up a mixture of pounded grain and honey, and the Romans went one worse with grain and salt. The elaborately iced and marzipanned creations we know today didn't evolve until the 17th century.

It is usually assumed that the Romans introduced the wedding cake to Britain, along with straight roads and central heating, but Sir John Lubbock (in his Origin of Civilization, 1870) claimed that "among the Iroquois, the bride and bridegroom used to partake together of a cake of 'sagamite',

which the bride offered to her husband. The Fiji Islanders have a very similar custom . . ." and so, he argued, if they could come up with the idea without the help of the Romans, why not the Ancient Britons.

Equally *primaeval* is the urge to throw things at the bride. The Hebrews combined the two customs and threw cake; and, as late as last century, cake or biscuits were still being scattered or broken over the heads of rural brides in Britain. The Greeks threw grain, fruit and sweetmeats. Roman bridegrooms had a chance to hit back; they traditionally threw nuts to the young men who formed part of the noisy procession which, as with the Greeks, accompanied the bride and groom to their new home. All these missiles were thought of as fertility symbols.

The following Greek myth is found in A Short History of Marriage by Ethel Urlin.

The Greeks had a charming myth concerning Hymen, the god of marriage. He was a young man of Athens, who rescued his mistress and her companions from a gang of pirates who fell upon them as they were celebrating the Eleusinian mysteries upon the sea-shore. He afterwards demanded the hand of his beloved in marriage as ransom, and so happy were they that the name of Hymen was invoked in all future nuptials, until he became the tutelary deity of marriage:

There let Hymen oft appear,
In saffron robe, and taper clear.

Yellow, the colour of flame, is in some countries the colour of the marriage robe. The bride in ancient days was covered by a veil called the flammeum, and all vows made under this were considered sacred. A much later goddess of marriage was Hera or Juno. She was represented as a crowned and dignified matron accompanied by the peacock, which was sacred to her.

The following Hindu poem from the Ramayana, one of the two epics of the Hindu religion, describes the wedding of Sita.

Dasaratha and his party undertook the four-day journey from Ayodhya to Videha, and were received there with courteous and generous welcome by their hosts. After the exchange of

gifts, appropriate preparations were made for the wedding, including the proper sacrifices, the Kāutuka rite of investiture with the nuptial cord, the preparation of the site, presentation of the flames and the recitation of the sacred mantra (hymns). The ritual and vows of the wedding of Rāma and Sītā are still repeated in many Hindu weddings. The ceremony was under the general direction of the sage Vaisishtha, from Dasaratha's court.

* * *

Softly came the sweet-eyed Sita--bridal blush upon her brow--
Rama in his manly beauty came to take the sacred vow,
Janak placed his beauteous daughter facing Dasarantha's son,
Spoke with father's fond emotion and the holy rite was done:

"This is Sita, child of Janak, dearer unto him than life,
Henceforth sharer of thy virtue, be she, Prince, thy faithful
wife,
Of thy weal and woe partaker, be she thine in every land,
Cherish her in joy and sorrow, clasp her hand within thy hand,
As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And my Sita, best of women, follows thee in death or life!"

Tears bedew his ancient bosom, gods and men his wishes share,
And he sprinkles holy water on the blest and wedded pair.
Next he turned to Sita's sister, Urmila of beauty rare,
And to Lakshman, young and valiant, spoke in accents soft and
fair . . .

The following narrations are descriptions of a Doukhobor and a Quaker wedding. These ceremonies show a contrast in formality with other traditions because they involve only a simple exchange of promises before witnesses. The Doukhobor wedding is an oral recollection of one man's wedding in Saskatchewan in 1920.

We had to go and register at the municipal registry at that time. I don't know if we had our own registry. It was pretty simple . . . We were blessed by both parents, hers and mine, "for a life" as the blessing goes. They asked us if we love each other, we said yes; intend to live with each other, yes; very best of luck both in health and happiness. I wish you health and happiness and so on. And I think maybe it is

strange to some people that there was no minister or anybody to perform the ceremony, but I think that the parents' blessing is more effective and has more reality than anybody else's blessing. When the parents bless their children, then they bless them from their hearts and souls.

So I think that there was nothing wrong with that kind of a marriage and of course, there are thousands of us being married that way and live just as good as any other, no matter which way they were married and at which church or how the ceremony was performed. It doesn't make any difference. What I think is this: . . . if there is no love between these two, there is no marriage. Love is the one that marries the couple, that binds them together. Before any ceremonies of any sort that is performed, the love is the first priority. If you don't love anybody, you don't come near him, you don't get together. But once you get together, you say well, we want to get married and all this ceremony is just a witness of marriage.

This excerpt of a Quaker wedding is found in A Procession of Friends by Daisy Newman.

Early on Easter morning, 1970, a large company of well-wishers gathered in the Race Street Meetinghouse, Philadelphia, to witness the marriage of Marjorie Nelson to Robert Perisho. Although April was only two days away, the driving rain froze as it came down. The Meetinghouse corridors buzzed with people parking umbrellas and exuberantly greeting friends. But once they entered the Meeting room, they joined the living silence which those who arrived early had prepared. This was a Meeting for Worship. In accordance with custom, there was no music, there were no flowers.

Three men and three women occupied the raised facing benches, which formed what was called "the ministers' gallery" in the old days. Then, the gallery was reserved on one side for women ministers in somber silks and wearing bonnets, and the other side for men ministers, whose coats had no collars and who kept their broadbrims on during Meeting except when someone offered prayer or they themselves felt moved to speak. The Friends who sat there today were not necessarily recorded ministers. They were not segregated by sex and they wore contemporary clothes. These were the Overseers, appointed "to see that the wedding is accomplished with dignity, reverence and simplicity."

Without fanfare, in the meaningful silence, the couple came in together. A Quaker bride is not given away. She

gives herself to the bridegroom and he gives himself to her. The guests remained seated, silently watching Marge and Bob walk to the front of the Meeting and sit down on the narrow marriage bench at the bottom of the gallery. They were followed by two young Friends. The bridesmaid wore an everyday dress and a Quaker bonnet; the best man wore his version of plain Quaker attire. These two took their places on either side of the bride and groom.

Marge wore nothing on her head. She carried a little bunch of violets and lilies of the valley--a couple of months later, she might have picked them herself in the woods at Pendle Hill.

In the deeply reverent silence, a young Friend from Ireland offered prayer. Then there was silence again until Bob and Marge felt moved to stand and make their promises to each other before the assembled company. Bob took Marge's hand and said with great solemnity, "In the presence of God and these our friends, I take thee, Marjorie Nelson, to be my wife, promising with divine assistance to be unto thee a loving and faithful husband so long as we both shall live." He put the ring on her finger.

Marge's whole heart was in her eyes as she said more softly, "In the presence of God and these our friends, I take thee, Robert Perisho, to be my husband," and went on to make the identical promise. When she had slipped a ring on Bob's finger, they kissed and sat down.

The bridesmaid and best man got up to fetch a little table from the aisle. It held the scroll on which the marriage certificate was engrossed. The table was placed in front of Bob and Marge. He signed the certificate first, then Marge did, using her new name. All the guests--adults and children--were witnesses to the marriage and later, during the reception, they would sign the certificate.

After a time, Marge's father, who was sitting on one of the front benches with Beryl, rose and read some Quaker sentiments regarding marriage. "The family is the standing witness that man is not intended to live alone; that he becomes what he is meant to be as his character is trained in unselfishness by responsibility for others, and by the claims and duties of a common life."

The Jewish, Zoroastrian and Hindu religions reflect more formality in their marriage ceremonies. The wedding service for Jewish couples, described here from With This Ring by Elizabeth Lavarack, takes place in the synagogue. It consists of a betrothal,

which establishes the legal bond between the couple, and the marriage.

Originally these were two quite distinct ceremonies, well separated in time, but a few centuries ago they became merged into one. The groom must give his wife something of value--the ring--in the presence of two qualified witnesses and recite the words: "Behold thou art consecrated unto me by this ring according to the law of Moses and of Israel". By her acceptance the bond is sealed.

The ring itself must be of precious metal but unjewelled, and is placed on the index finger of the bride's right hand (by which in ancient times one symbolically acquired things) where it remains until after the ceremony when it may be transferred to the left ring finger.

The minister usually addresses a few words, in English, to the young couple before the betrothal; then afterwards, the "Kethubah" or "marriage certificate" is read out in Aramaic, an ancient Semitic language. A shortened English version of this document is given, listing the obligations of the husband to his wife for her sustenance clothing and marital welfare, and also providing for her rights. Her obligations are that "she takes upon herself all the duties incumbent upon a Jewish wife".

Seven benedictions are sung and blessings made over wine which is drunk from the same cup by bride and groom to symbolize their union.

Finally, the groom is presented with a glass wrapped in a cloth, which he steps on to break. This traditionally serves as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple so that even in a time of great joy one may remember historical tragedies and so keep a sense of proportion.

The service concludes with the loveliest of all priestly blessings:

May the Lord bless you and keep you;
May the Lord cause His face to shine upon you and be
gracious unto you;
May the Lord turn His face unto you and give you peace.

The service takes place with the bride and groom surrounded by both the immediate families standing under the "chuppah" which is a canopy standing on four poles. Some people believe that the "chuppah" represents the joint home of the couple, others believe that it symbolizes the vastness of the sky under which they are joined. In some communities and in Israel, the "chuppah" is actually erected under the sky in the open air as a "symbol of good fortune, that their seed may be like the stars of the heavens".

The Zoroastrian ceremony described below comes from an interview with a representative of the Zoroastrian community.

Zoroastrian marriage ceremonies are religious ceremonies conducted in public by a priest or priests. They are not, however, usually conducted in a place of worship. All garments are white--a symbol of purity, goodness and the truth. A flame is central to all Zoroastrian ceremonies--a symbol of the spiritual flame; the spiritual and ethical values of the faith. Members of both families stand behind the bride and groom as witnesses and in order that they may give their consent to the marriage. Whilst blessing the couple, a priest showers the couple with rice--a symbol of prosperity and the fulfilment of the couple's wishes.

The following Hindu marriage is an excerpt from Comparative Religions by Douglas Charing.

The marriage ceremony takes place at the bride's home, or the hall hired by the bride's parents. The marriage day, and time, are fixed by the priest by referring to the religious calendar. A great amount of preparation takes place before the wedding. Although it is illegal to give a dowry, the bride's parents try to give as much as they can afford to their daughter. Many saris are bought for the bride, as well as for the bridegroom's relations, by the bride's parents. Many relations of the extended family arrive a few days before the wedding to help in the preparation. The bride takes a special bath and the hands and soles of her feet are decorated with an orange plant dye, henna, in very intricate patterns. The wedding dress and jewellery vary from region to region, but usually the bride wears a red sari with gold thread embroidered throughout. For the wedding day, the bride is as resplendent as her family can make her.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Lord Ganesha is worshipped. A special canopy (mandap), decorated with tinsel, balloons and coloured lights, is erected for the wedding ceremony. When the bridegroom's party arrives, they are welcomed by the bride's mother as well as a girl from the family, who carries a little pot and a coconut on her head, and they perform a welcome ritual. The marriage ceremony is performed by the priest in the presence of the relations of both the bride and bridegroom. The parents of the bride welcome him in the same way as they would welcome God, by

washing his feet and giving him the best of everything. When the bride is given away by both the mother and father, the genealogy of the bride and bridegroom is recited. The sacred fire, agni, the witness of the ceremony, is then lit and many fine offerings are made while reciting mantras from the Vedas. A white cord is attached to the shoulders of the couple and seven steps (saptapadi) are taken around the fire. Each step has a meaning--"One step for food, two for strength, three for increasing wealth, four for good fortune, five for children, six for the seasons and seven for everlasting friendship. At the end of each complete round the bride is told to touch a stone (pashana) and remain stable like the stone.

Prayers for good fortune and peace conclude the ceremony. There are then celebrations for family and friends in which a great deal of money is spent.

The following Anglican, Sikh and Eastern Orthodox excerpts are examples of actual words used in marriage ceremonies.

Declaration of the purposes and intent of marriage in the Anglican Church of Canada for a couple to sign prior to the marriage ceremony is quoted from Canon 21.

We hereby declare that we intend to enter into marriage which we acknowledge to be a union in faithful love, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for better or for worse, until we are separated by death.

We undertake to prepare ourselves for the exchange of vows at our wedding, recognizing that by this mutual exchange our union in marriage will be established.

We intend to strive thereafter to fulfill the purpose of marriage; the mutual friendship, support and comfort to one another, the procreation (if it may be) and the nurture of children, and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfillment in a community of faithful love.

Within the Sikh religion the person officiating at the function tells the couple about the obligation of married life. The father or the guardian of the bride comes forward to tie the edge of her dupatta,

the long head-dress to the bridegroom's sash. The granthi reads from the Guru Granth Sahib. The same reading is sung by musicians while the couple walk round the Guru Granth Sahib in clockwise direction. The action is repeated four times in response to the Lavans. The Lavans convey the highest moral and spiritual ideals to the couple.

THE LAVANS

Guru Ram Das's Epithalamium

I

By this first round you offer yourselves as a sacrifice to the all-pervading Deity who inaugurates you in the duties of home.

Accept the Guru's Words as your religion in place of Brahma and his Veda; and it will help you to shun the ways of sin. Let this be your law of life--to meditate on the Name of God which is the theme of all scriptures.

You should contemplate the Guru as the perfect exemplar, who leads you out of sin.

Fortunate are those who have been made serenely happy by a yearning springing up in their hearts for the Heavenly Bridegroom.

This is the first round, with which the marriage ceremony begins.

II

By the second round I express my gratefulness to God; who has introduced me to the true and perfect Enlightener.

The mind, washed of the dirt of egoism, imbibes the Fear that dispels all fear.

It is a holy Fear, got by singing God's praises and beholding Him face to face.

As the soul of the universe diffused everywhere and filling every place.

Within me and without me is the one God my Master, whose jubilation I sing in the company of His saints

Thus goes the second round, with the strains of ecstasy ringing in my ears.

III

As I circle round the third time in admiration of the Beloved,
Love is produced in the heart which withdraws itself from
other affections.

Brought together by His saints I congratulate myself on my
union with Him.

I have met the Pure One, I sing His praises and utter His Word.
In the company of holy men, got by rare chance, I tell tales
of the Ineffable.

My heart resounds with the Name of God, whose worship in the
consummation of my destiny.

In this way, with the third round, dispassionate Love is born
in the heart.

IV

At the fourth, sacrificial turning, love reaches the stage of
perfect Harmony, with the consciousness of complete union
with the Lord.

Through the mediation of the Guru the union brought about is
natural and tastes sweet to the body and soul.

It so pleased my Lord that He should taste sweet to me, and I
should remain absorbed in Him.

I have obtained my Spouse who is after my heart, and I
congratulate myself.

God Himself arranged this marriage, and the Bride's heart
rejoices in His Name.

With the fourth round God is obtained as the Imperishable
Husband.

The following is an excerpt from the Eastern Orthodox Ritual
of Marriage.

The priest now blesses
the wedding rings saying:

PRIEST: These rings are blessed in the name of the Father, and
of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The rings are now exchanged, first
to the Groom, and then to the Bride.

PRIEST: The servant of God, _____, is espoused to the handmaid
of God, _____, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The handmaid of God, _____, is espoused to the servant of God, _____, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Bride and the Groom place
their hands together on the Holy
Gospel; the priest covers them
with the epitrachil and they
repeat after him:

GROOM: I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife,
and I promise to love you,
to respect you,
to be always faithful to you,
and never to forsake you,
until death do us part.
So help me God,
one in the Holy Trinity,
and by all the Saints.

BRIDE: I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband,
and I promise to love you,
to respect you,
to be always faithful to you,
and never to forsake you,
until death do us part.
So help me God,
one in the Holy Trinity,
and by all the Saints.

Wreaths or jeweled crowns are now
presented, first to the Groom then
to the Bride, by the priest. They
are either placed on their heads,
or held above them by members of
the bridal party.

PRIEST: The servant of God, _____, is crowned in marriage to
the handmaid of God, _____, in the name of the Father, and of
the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The handmaid of God, _____, is crowned in marriage to the
servant of God, _____, in the name of the Father, and of the
Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O Lord, our God, crown them with glory and honour!

CANDLES may be given to
the Bride and Groom

It is customary that the priest leads the Bride and Groom in procession three times around the Tetrapod. Their hands may be tied together by an embroidered cloth. This procession symbolizes the journey through life that they are about to begin.

From all these examples one can only rejoice in the variety of ways humankind celebrates married life.

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MARRIAGE

1. Love
2. Marriage Law and Form
3. Spiritual Equality
4. Fidelity, Commitment and Responsibility
5. Divorce and Remarriage

LOVE

William Penn portrayed ideal marital love in this letter he wrote in 1693.

Never marry but for love; but see that thou lovest what is lovely.
He that minds a body and not a soul has not the better part of that relation, and will consequently want the noblest comfort of a married life.

Between a man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love . . .
As love ought to bring them together, so it is the best way to keep them well together.

A husband and wife that love and value one another show their children and servants that they should do so too. Others visibly lose their authority in their families by their contempt of one another; and teach their children to be unnatural by their own examples.

Let not enjoyment lessen, but augment, affection; it being the basest of passions to like when we have not, what we slight when we possess.

Here it is we ought to search out our pleasure, where the field is large and full of variety, and of an enduring nature; sickness, poverty, or disgrace being not able to shake it, because it is not under the moving influences of worldly contingencies.

Nothing can be more entire and without reserve; nothing more zealous, affectionate and sincere; nothing more contented and constant than such a couple, nor no greater temporal felicity than to be one of them.

The concept of love shared by a married couple has undergone a long historical evolution described by Alan Watts in Nature, Man and Woman.

Historians are not in clear agreement as to the origins of this extraordinary movement, but the weight of opinion is

that it . . . was a form of the Persian religion of Manichaeism, of which vestiges remained in Western Europe from the days of the Roman Empire, or was reintroduced by returning crusaders. Now, Manichaeism was a syncretist movement and seems to have been one of the principal carriers of Indian ideas to the West. These included an extreme dualism of spirit and nature . . . and a conception of love as "pure desire."

Love describes the most powerful feelings human beings have for each other and for their Creator. To the Roman Catholic writer, Michael Prieur, the spirituality of love is a reflection of God.

Love is a giving of oneself to another in a relationship that goes deeper than one's own self-interests. Love is a reverence and respect for the sensitivities, values, and qualities of another person. Love is the complete acceptance of the other person for what he or she is, not only for what he or she does. Love is the reflection of God himself in us, his creatures.

Agape, or Godly love, does not distinguish between the loveable and unloveable; it is a love given without expectations. In a recent public forum on family life, Father Stephen Wojcickowsky of St. Nicholas' Ukrainian Catholic Church shared his sentiments on agape.

No walls exist, it is God's kind of love.
It loves the other not because of beauty
or talents, but because of God.
The one love does not exist for my sake;
rather, to exist for his or her sake,
to love, cherish and respect.
Such agape love has its inspiration in Jesus Christ
who loved us even when we were sinners.

Agape was first translated into the English Bible as "charity." Pope Pius XI precisely defines charity in reference to husband and wife:

Charity is not an attachment founded in mere carnal and transitory desire or limited to words of affection; it is deep-seated devotion of the heart which, since true love shows itself in words, is manifested in action. This action in the home is not confined to mutual help; it must have as its higher and indeed chief objective that of shaping and perfecting the interior life of husband and wife. Their life-partnership must help them to increase daily in the practice of virtue and above all to grow in the true love of God.

The love of God as part of the marriage relationship is central to all religions. What Jehovah's Witnesses call a threefold spiritual link of God, woman and man is considered the foundation for fulfillment and salvation. Another Christian ideal holds that a husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church. For Sikhs the journey to find God is accomplished through married life as marriage is a union with God as well as with a spouse. A Hindu and Sikh ideal contends that the love of a wife for her husband parallels the love of a human soul for God. The Sikh Lavans reproduced in the previous section on Ceremonies poetically describe the harmony created between a couple and their Lord.

Married love has another nature, the nature of Eros, described by the ancient Greek writer, Hermes, found in A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom by W. N. Perry.

In that conjunction of the two sexes, or, to speak more truly, that fusion of them into one, which may be rightly named Eros, or Aphrodite, or both at once, there is a deeper meaning than man can comprehend. It is a truth to be accepted as sure and evident above all other truths, that by God, the Master of all generative power, has been devised and bestowed upon all creatures this sacrament of eternal reproduction, with all the affection, all the joys and gladness, all the yearning and the heavenly love that are inherent in its being.

MARRIAGE LAW AND FORM

Necessary requirements must be fulfilled in order for a religious marriage to take place. These include the secular demands of the community and religious sanctions.

Three civil laws applying to marriage concern age, monogamy and registration. While government imposes regulations on the religious act of marriage, religions have also been able to impose changes on government. K. J. Tarasoff illustrates in Traditional Doukhobor Folkways how one group was able to effect change in government policy.

Originally, when Doukhobors were clustered in small, rural groups, the wedding was done just in the family homes. But now, because relatives and friends are always invited to the event, there is absolutely no point why they can't do it in the community home where they always gather; and then, together with the parents' blessing, the community group gives the young people their blessing as well. It's not actually a ceremony; it's just a group blessing for the two young people that wish to announce to the public that they will now be man and wife; and this can now be registered officially and with the signature of the witnesses, the parents or reliable members of the community, they are legally married and recognized. . . . The B.C. Government's recent appointment of a Marriage Commissioner came about as a result of a request from the Doukhobors to have their past marriages recognized.

Parental approval is important because marriage is more than the joining of two persons; it is the union of two families. Martin Luther wrote on parental approval: "Engagements and marriages, entered into without the knowledge and consent of parents were to be considered as having no force." Parental consent as a pre-condition for marriage is also illustrated in the following from the Baha'i faith:

Baha'u'llah has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is required for Baha'i marriage. This applies whether the parents are Baha'is or non-Baha'is, divorced for years or not. This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator.

In the form of marriage known as the assisted marriage, the role of parental consent is elevated. In this type of marriage not only consent but often parental choice determines the marriage partner.

An explanation on the importance of parental decisions is found in

The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practises:

Marriage is not a private matter between two persons. Through the couple two families become closely connected and into one family group comes a stranger, the wife. She has therefore to be compatible not only with her husband but with his parents, brothers, their wives and his unmarried sisters. Ideally the marriage is based upon love, the love of both families for their children.

If a couple is to be married in a religious ceremony it is expected that they will be aware of the true nature of their vows.

Mary Baker Eddy affirmed the view of many faiths when she wrote:

Matrimony should never be entered into without a full recognition of its enduring obligations on both sides. There should be the most tender solicitude for each other's happiness, and mutual attention and approbation should wait on all the years of married life. . . .

Marriage should improve the human species, becoming a barrier against vice, a protection to woman, strength to man, and a centre for the affections. This, however, in a majority of cases, is not its present tendency, and why? Because the education of the higher nature is neglected, and other

considerations--passion, frivolous amusements, personal adornment, display, and pride,--occupy thought.

The spiritual implications of marriage vows are important; they are a promise of a spiritual union in the presence of God. If the couple is not of the same faith, most religions expect they will take instruction in the faith of the other to achieve a more meaningful exchange of vows. To ensure the spiritual aspect of marriage is secure, some religions do not allow marriage until the persons have been baptized.

The eternal marriage of a Mormon couple within the temple requires that they be baptized into the church, members in good standing for at least one year, have interviews with the Bishop of the Ward and the Stake President and obtain a temple recommendation to enter the temple.

The presence of witnesses at a marriage ceremony is common to most religions. The number may vary from a minimum of two to the whole congregation. The presence of witnesses ensures the celebration and recognition of the spiritual union before the religious community. The public announcement of marriage provides security against the fickleness of human emotion and protection for the new vows.

SPIRITUAL EQUALITY

Many religious writings reflect the concept that men and women are able to achieve an equal dignity before God based upon their depth and purity of feelings and devotion. Culturally, there may be a difference between husband and wife in social status and marriage roles.

The steadfastness of God's love helps men and women find, develop and maintain harmony and spiritual intimacy within their families.

In the stories of creation in Islam and Judeo-Christianity, God created man and from man created woman. The examples below are from first, the Koran, Sura IV, 1 and, second, the Bible, Genesis 2, 18-25.

O Mankind! reverence
Your Guardian-Lord,
Who created you
From a single person,
Created, of like nature,
His mate, and from them twain
Scattered (like seeds)
Countless men and women;
Reverence God, through whom
Ye demand your mutual (rights),
And (reverence) the wombs
(That bore you): for God
Ever watches over you.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Ad'-äm to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Ad'-äm called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

And Ad'-äm gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Ad'-äm there was not found an help meet for him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Ad'-äm, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Ad'-äm said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

The Baha'i interpretation of creation indicates that man and woman were created from the same substance.

O CHILDREN OF MEN:

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

A charming story about the beginnings of marriage is found in this Sanskrit myth from F. W. Bain, A Digit of the Moon,

In the beginning, when Twashtri came to the creation of woman, he found that he had exhausted his materials in the making of man, and that no solid elements were left. In this dilemma, after profound meditation, he did as follows. He took the rotundity of the moon, and the curves of creepers, and the clinging of tendrils, and the trembling of grass, and the slenderness of the reed, and the bloom of flowers, and the lightness of leaves, and the tapering of the elephant's trunk, and the glances of deer, and the clustering of rows of bees, and the joyous gaiety of sunbeams, and the weeping of clouds, and the fickleness of the winds, and the timidity of the hare, and the vanity of the peacock, and the softness of the parrot's bosom, and the hardness of adamant, and the sweetness of honey, and the cruelty of the tiger, and the warm glow of fire, and the coldness of snow, and the chattering of jays, and the cooing of the kokila, and the hypocrisy of the crane, and the fidelity of the chakrawaka, and compounding all these together, he made woman and gave her to man. But after one week, man came to him and said: Lord, this creature that you have given me makes my life miserable. She chatters incessantly and teases me beyond endurance, never leaving me alone; and she requires incessant attention, and takes all my time up, and cries about nothing, and is always idle; and so I have come to give her back again, as I cannot live with her. So Twashtri said: Very well; and he took her back. Then after another week, man came again to him and said: Lord, I find that my life is very lonely, since I gave you back that creature. I remember how she used to dance and sing to me, and look at me out of the corner of her eye, and play with me, and cling to

me; and her laughter was music, and she was beautiful to look at, and soft to touch; so give her back to me again. So Twashtri said: Very well; and gave her back again. Then after only three days, man came back to him again and said: Lord, I know not how it is; but after all I have come to the conclusion that she is more of a trouble than a pleasure to me; so please take her back again. But Twashtri said: Out on you! Be off! I will have no more of this. You must manage how you can. Then man said: But I cannot live with her. And Twashtri replied: Neither could you live without her. And he turned his back on man, and went on with his work. Then man said: What is to be done? for I cannot live either with her or without her.

In the stories of creation God created man and woman to provide each other with necessary comfort, companionship, care and concern.

The essential role of women in the ongoing creation of life gives them special status in many religious traditions. An example from the Sikh tradition is taken from Aad Granth.

Sayeth Guru Nanak:

From the woman is our birth, in the woman's womb are we shaped,
 To the women are we engaged, to the women are we wedded.
 The woman is our friend and from the women is our family,
 If one woman dies--we seek another, through the woman are the
 bonds of the world.
 O why call woman an evil who giveth birth to rulers.
 From the woman is the woman; without the woman there is none.
 Nanak, without the Woman is One True Lord alone.

Within Hinduism the indispensibility of women to men defines their essential equality with men. A wife is necessary for a man to achieve spiritual growth and morality. The wife by loving and honouring her husband achieves the same level of spiritual exaltation he achieves through life long spiritual contemplation and study. The ideal marital relationship, showing the strength and constancy of

women is found in the legend of Rama and Sita.

For the faithful woman follows where her wedded lord may lead,
In the banishment of Rama, Sita's exile is decreed,
Sire nor son nor loving brother rules the wedded woman's state,
With her lord she falls or rises, with her consort courts her
fate.

If the righteous son of Raghu wends to forests dark and drear,
Sita steps before her husband, wild and thorny paths to clear.
Like the tasted refuse water cast thy timid thoughts aside,
Take me to the pathless jungle, bid me by my lord abide.
Car and steed and gilded palace, vain are these to woman's life,
Dearer is her husband's shadow to the loved and loving wife!
For my mother often taught me and my father often spake,
That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make,
As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting
life!

Therefore, bid me seek the jungle and in pathless forests roam,
Where the wild deer freely ranges and the tiger makes his home.
Happier than in father's mansions in the woods will Sita rove,
Waste no thought on home or kindred, nestling in her husband's
love!

World-renowned is Rama's valour, fearless by her Rama's side,
Sita will still live and wander with a faithful woman's pride,
And the wild fruit she will gather from the fresh and fragrant
wood,

And the food by Rama tasted shall be Sita's cherished food.
Bid me seek thy sylvan greenwoods, wooded hills and plateaus
high,

Limpid rills and crystal rivulets as they softly ripple by,
And where in the lake of lotus tuneful ducks their plumage
lave,

Let me with my loving Rama skim the cool translucent wave!

Years will pass in happy union--happiest lot to woman given--
Sita seeks not throne or empire, nor the brighter joys of
heaven,

Heaven conceals not brighter mansions in the sunny fields of
pride,

Where without her lord and husband faithful Sita would reside!
Therefore let me seek the jungle where the jungle-rangers rove,
Dearer than the royal palace, where I share my husband's love,
And my heart in sweet communion shall my Rama's wishes share,
And my wifely toil shall lighten Rama's load of woe and care!

Of all women honoured in the Koran, Mary Mother of Jesus stands

highest. The story of the visit of the angel and the birth of Jesus is given in the chapter named after Mary.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
And make mention of Mary in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East, And had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man.

She said: Lo! I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from thee, if thou art God-fearing.

He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless son.

She said: How can I have a son when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste?

He said: So (it will be). Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me. And (it will be) that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained.

And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place.

And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm tree.

She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this, and had become a thing of naught, forgotten!

Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not!

Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee,

And shake the trunk of the palm tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee.

So eat and drink and be consoled. And if thou meetest any mortal, say: Lo! I have vowed a fast unto the Beneficent, and may not speak this day to any mortal.

Then she brought him to her own folk, carrying him.

They said: O Mary! Thou hast come with an amazing thing.

Oh sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot.

Then she pointed to him. They said: How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy?

He spake: Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet,

And hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I remain alive,

And (hath made me) dutiful toward her who bore me, and hath not made me arrogant, unblest.

Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!

Such was Jesus, son of Mary.

Religious teachings often prescribe for men the role of protector and supporter and for women the role of helper. In the Koran, Sura IV, 34, the husband is instructed to protect and maintain his wife and she is instructed to care for him.

Men are the protectors
And maintainers of women.
Because God has given
The one more (strength)
Than the other, and because
They support them
From their means
Therefore the righteous women
Are devoutly obedient, and guard
In (the husband's) absence
What God would have them guard.

FIDELITY, COMMITMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

The basis for marital relationships is personal responsibility for moral conduct: sexual fidelity, commitment to the family unit and the acceptance of mature responsibilities for marriage and family life.

Sexual fidelity represents the highest expression of intimacy between a man and a woman. The power of sexual love to create new generations symbolizes the ultimate, yet basic reason, for existence. In Christianity, the moral character of marriage is strengthened by commitment to the teachings of Christ and the New Testament. Chastity, sexual fidelity and faithfulness are analogous to Christ's constancy and God's eternal love. Faithfulness and loyalty are reflected in

Paul's letter to the Ephesians,

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The important concept of "one-flesh" is explained by Derrick Sherwin Bailey, an Anglican, in The Mystery of Love and Marriage.

The emphasis in "one flesh" is primarily upon henosis which results from the sexual union of man and woman. In Scripture "one" is a rich and suggestive word. In the Genesis passage it may at first have meant simply that husband and wife become "one" in relation to the community--that through marriage a new social unit emerges--but when taken into the context of the New Testament it gains greatly in significance. It implies the resolution of discord, the transcending of superficial difference and antagonisms at a new and deeper level of existence or experience; not an amalgamation in which the identity of the constituents is swallowed up and lost in an undifferentiated unity, nor mere conjunction in which no real union is involved. The singleness for which "one" stands, in its most pregnant use, is organic, not arithmetical, and has a suggestion of uniqueness; it is exemplified at its highest in the mysterious triunity of God, of which the biunity of husband and wife is an analogue.

Sexual fidelity and chastity are an integral part of the Judaic ideal of matrimony. That these apply equally to husband and wife, is explained in the following discussion of the Talmud by Dr. A. Cohen.

The ideal of matrimony, which is inculcated by the Talmud, is of the highest. The ordinary term for a marriage is Kiddushin, denoting "sanctification." It is so called because "the husband prohibits his wife to the whole world like an object which is dedicated to the Sanctuary" (Kid. 2b). It implies the strictest chastity in both parties. "Immorality in the house is like a worm on vegetables" (Sot. 3b), and it holds good of the husband as well as the wife.

"Honour your wife, for thereby you enrich yourself. A man should be ever careful about the honour due to his wife, because no blessing is experienced in his house except on her account" (B.M. 59a). "A man should spend less than his means on food and drink for himself, up to his means on his clothes, and above his means on honouring his wife and children, because they are dependent upon him, while he is dependent upon Him Who spake and the Universe came into being" (Chul. 84b).

Marital commitments between husband and wife are derived from their commitment and loyalty to God. A Sikh comment states that "A man must love his spouse consistently and faithfully; that is the first step towards realization of God." For Christian Scientists commitment to God is paramount and broadens rather than lessens commitment to another person.

It is never too late for man's unity with God to be understood and demonstrated. It is never too late to recognize that man is not a social animal but a spiritual being. When this right identification begins to take place, the idea of commitment to God, Father-Mother Love, replaces a narrow, vulnerable sense of commitment to another person without lessening our commitment to the marriage itself. We are able to surrender the feeling of "what I want is right" in obedience to Jesus' prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Commitment also entails a loving companionship dispelling isolation and loneliness. For Christians and Jews this promise is found in Genesis II, 18, "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man

should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Commenting on companionship, Dr. John Pickford, in Marriage God's Style, wrote:

Companionship contains the very essence of love which is sharing. One thing Adam could not do alone. He could not share. Until he could share he was not fully like God who created him. God shares. God longs so deeply to have one like Himself that He creates man in His same image to share His presence and love. He places the same hunger in man. When the centre of gravity is within himself, man remains forever lonely. But as he shares himself, he finds companionship. This is what marriage is about. It is a shared life, a companionship.

For Baha'is commitment and companionship are a basis of marital relationships:

Baha'i marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity . . .

The true marriage of Baha'is is this, that husband and wife should be united both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of God. This is Baha'i marriage.

The mature acceptance of marital responsibilities arises from the joys of commitment and companionship. Marital responsibilities are clearly defined for the orthodox Hindu by the ideal of the "householder."

The second stage of life, that of the householder, is frequently, and with full justification, glorified in Hindu literature as the sacred field for all achievements, and as

offering the best scope for the realization of the first three ends of man, dharma, artha, and kama. The starting point of the life of the householder is, of course, marriage. Hindu marriage is regarded as being essentially a sacrament, a religious duty and not a contract. The real significance of Hindu marriage is that it marks the beginning of a more responsible and purposeful life. The sacrament of marriage, and the various caste restrictions which normally govern every Hindu marriage, imply a perfect biological, psychological, moral, and spiritual union of husband and wife. The relationship between the two is governed by the sentiment of loyalty and devotion to each other until death.

Note also the seven marriage vows which are: to provide food and shelter; to stay healthy, physically, mentally and spiritually; to acquire wealth by righteous means; to be knowledgeable; to be blessed with children; never to show or display anger; to be united.

A major responsibility in marriage is parenthood. The Roman Catholic view of responsible marriage and parenthood is contained in the following extract from Humanae Vitae, section 10.

Married love requires that a husband and wife be aware of their mission of "responsible parenthood". Today this is insisted upon and must be exactly understood.

Responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of biological process; the person discovers, in the power of giving life, biological laws which are a part of the human person.

Responsible parenthood means that necessary control by the mind and the will be exercised over tendencies to instinct and passion.

In relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised: either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a large family, or by the decision, made for serious reasons and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the present, or even for a longer time, the creation of a new life.

Responsible parenthood also implies a more profound relationship to the objective moral order established by God, of which an informed conscience is the faithful interpreter. The responsible exercise of parenthood implies, therefore,

that the husband and wife recognize fully their own duties towards God, themselves, towards the family and society . . .

Commitment in marriage provides continuity and stability to the family system. Permanence is required not only to give children a human shelter and a place of trust but also to provide shelter and emotional continuity to the marriage partners.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Religions perceive marriage to be the foundation of family life, and family life the foundation of society; therefore, the dissolution of marriage is gravely addressed. Divorce causes moral conflict within individuals, families and society. For instance, what may be best for the family may not be best for the individual. The complexities of divorce are difficult, frustrating and universally sad. Each religion addresses the problems of divorce and remarriage but with different emphasis and consideration for human nature.

The basis of Christian doctrine on divorce and remarriage is contained in Matthew, XIX, 3-12.

And there came unto him Pharisees, tempting him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I

say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.

The Roman Catholic church holds that consummated sacramental marriage is absolutely indissoluble. Safeguards in its doctrine for human fallibility are presented below:

Because of the unity and indissolubility of marriage, the church denies that civil divorce can break the bond of a valid marriage. However, because of the possibility of marital distress, the church permits an innocent and aggrieved party (husband or wife) to seek and obtain a civil divorce for the purpose of acquiring title and right to such civil effects of divorce as separate habitation, maintenance and custody of children. This divorce, if obtained, does not break the bond of a valid marriage. No remarriage is possible.

A decree of nullity, sometimes improperly called an annulment, may on occasion be granted. This is a decision by a competent church authority--a bishop, a diocesan marriage tribunal or the Sacred Roman Rota--that an apparently valid marriage was actually invalid from the beginning because of the unknown or concealed existence from the beginning of an essential defect in consent, or a condition placed by one or both of the parties against the very nature of marriage.

The Protestant position is one in which divorce, in the case of adultery, is acceptable with allowance for remarriage for the innocent party. Elements of forgiveness and redemption underlie most Christian churches' position on divorce as demonstrated by the following excerpt by the American Presbyterians in 1959.

It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution save that caused by the death of either husband or wife. However, the weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows so that marriage dies at the heart and the union becomes intolerable; yet only in cases of extreme, unrepented-of, and irremediable

unfaithfulness (physical or spiritual) should separation or divorce be considered. Such separation or divorce is accepted as permissible only because of the failure of one or both of the partners, and does not lessen in any way the divine intention for indissoluble union. The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the Church in keeping with the redemptive gospel of Christ, when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evident, and a firm purpose of and endeavour after Christian marriage is manifested.

Judaism came to regard divorce not as a punishment but a frank recognition that marriage may not always fulfill its sacred purpose. Divorce is discussed in the following extract from Bridge to Brotherhood by Stuart Rosenberg.

Just as marriage is integrally a part of the religious life, so is its dissolution; thus, in addition to the solemnizing of the wedding in accordance with Jewish ritual practice, Orthodox and Conservative rabbis also require that a religious bill of divorce, called a get, be issued by a rabbinical court once the civil decree is granted. The Reform Jewish practice in this matter parallels closely the contention of some of the early Protestant reformers that the laws of marriage and divorce and their regulation are purely secular affairs, to be regulated by the state. To be sure, there was some disagreement on the question of divorce among the early rabbis. The school of Shammai ruled that divorce was prohibited except when adultery had been committed. The other school, that of gentle Hillel, whose views prevailed, permitted divorce on other grounds as well. The New Testament apparently adopted the view of Shammai, undoubtedly because such a view fitted in more closely with its understanding of human nature. The Jewish conception of man is quite different from that of the Christians, and its viewpoint is reflected not only in theological matters but concretely in such matters as marriage and divorce.

Islamic law holds strict rules and safeguards concerning divorce. Abdel Moghy Said discusses these in his book, Islam: A Progressive Faith for a Dynamic World:

Marriage is a noble communion between man and woman, a communion which is blessed by Allah and based on freedom of choice. It is to be made or dissolved by the free consent of both parties.

Islam leaves room for divorce as an undesirability, but not as a right to be excessively used. If it is deemed impossible for a couple to live together, after exhausting all means of conciliation and arbitration, they have but to separate. "If you fear a breach between the two of them, appoint an arbiter from her folk. If they desire amendment Allah will make them of one mind." (Qur'an Sura 4:35 Women) It is clear that divorce is permitted only as a last resort. As Prophet Muhammad said, "Divorce is the most hateful to Allah among that which is permitted." When divorce is deemed inevitable it must be carried out in a decent and kind way. "Divorce must be pronounced twice and then (a woman) must be retained in honour or released in kindness."

The Baha'i position on divorce also abhors the separation of two souls once brought together in spiritual love.

They must strictly refrain from divorce unless something ariseth which compelleth them to separate because of their aversion for each other, in that case with the knowledge of the Spiritual Assembly they may decide to separate. They must then be patient and wait one complete year. If during this year harmony is not re-established between them, then divorce may be realized. It should not happen that upon the occurrence of a slight friction or displeasure between husband and wife, the husband would think of union with some other woman, or God forbid, the wife also think of another husband. This is contrary to the standard of heavenly value and true chastity. The friends of God must so live and conduct themselves, and evince such excellence of character and conduct, as to make others astonished. The love between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul! Nay, greater would be the difficulty.

"In short, the foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife. If one of these two become the cause of divorce, that one will unquestionably fall into great difficulties, will become the victim of formidable calamities and experience deep remorse."

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FAMILY LIFE

1. Meaning and Functions of Family Life
2. Historic Family Traditions: Judaism and Hinduism
3. Parents' Rights and Duties

MEANING AND FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY LIFE

T. S. Eliot in Notes Toward the Definition of Culture described family spanning time.

. . . when I speak of the family I have in mind a bond which embraces . . . a piety toward the dead, however obscure, and a solicitude for the unborn, however remote. Unless this reverence for the past and future is cultivated in the home, it can never be more than a formal convention in the community.

One may perceive the meaning of family on two levels. First is the narrow concept of family as a small group of people who consider themselves bound by enduring ties of blood and adoption, accepting the responsibility for bringing up children, living under the same roof, sharing a common name. Second is the wider, humanistic level described as the "whole family of heaven and earth."

Through all the varied forms of family life over time and space four facts stand out clearly. First, there is a strong tie between mother and child at least during the child's early years. Second, some approximation to monogamy has been the dominant form of marriage. Third, nowhere do we find evidence of unregulated promiscuity. Fourth, in nearly all cultures the institution of the family is identified with four functions: procreation, orientation, division of labour between the sexes and status giving.

In serving the needs of human beings, family systems provide a place for the reproduction of the race as well as a place for the physical security, protection and material opportunities of its members.

Family systems assure the continuity of cultural heritage by providing for the social, spiritual, emotional and intellectual development of its members. Socially, family systems foster the development of desirable character traits; inculcate acceptable moral and ethical standards; and as the basis of society, develop sound relationships among themselves and between their neighbours.

HISTORIC FAMILY TRADITIONS: JUDAISM AND HINDUISM

The family is the oldest and toughest of all human institutions; it has outlasted much of what seemed eternal: gods, empires, systems of political economy. We may take as established that the family is rooted in the past, built on our biological heritage as well as human experience. It is a way of life shared not only by humankind but by other species as well. It is a complex of impulses and habits embedded in our nature and an integral part of every culture. The living together of man and woman, of parents and children, in an intimate relationship is firmly established and displays an enormous variety of structure, life cycle controls and functions. The variety of practices, rules and sentiments in the domestic institutions of different peoples, indicate that human nature is capable of adapting to a wide range of customs and controls.

Family has always been an integral part of human nature; it is a human social response to our biological nature. Family systems have fulfilled the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of individuals and communities. Their diverse complexity through time and space has

contributed to the rich mosaic of human philosophy and spirituality. Although older than religious institutions, family life has been the centre for cultural and religious heritage.

Judaism

Jewish family life has retained throughout the centuries characteristics to which the Bible and Talmud have contributed. The family in the Bible was strongly patriarchal with defined roles for its family members. The father or patriarch had the right to divorce, to practise polygamy and to control his family with absolute authority. Women's roles centred around the bearing of children and domestic duties. Filial devotion, expected equally by mother and father tempered parental authority. Ben Schlesinger writes of the ancient Hebrew family,

The function of the family, then, in ancient Israel, was to propagate the species, to satisfy human needs, to perpetuate religious life--in short, to serve as the fundamental unit of the social order. In its most primitive form, the family determined right and wrong, made laws, administered justice and maintained divine worship, and these characteristics tended to adhere for a long period. The father's authority over the child was almost absolute, and was but rarely abused. Strong family solidarity was a matter of course.

Ethical and religious education was a parental obligation, to train children for their life as members of the community of Israel as commanded by God, Deuteronomy VI, 1-9.

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

Hear therefore, O Is'-rä-ël, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

Hear, O Is'-rä-ël: The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

Four basic Jewish family values were developed through the Talmud and have governed the Jewish family for centuries. These included: one, "purity of the family," a sensible appraisal of sexual relationships; two, the obligation for effective childbearing and childrearing involving scrupulous care for children's physical, social, educational and religious needs; three, filial responsibility and; four, family compatibility in which each member contributed to family strength, unity, harmony and pride.

During the first centuries of the Christian era in Europe, marriage became formalized and the Jewish home provided security and peace in a hostile world. The obligation to teach children cultural and religious traditions established literacy centuries before it was regarded as essential elsewhere. "Thus instructed, the Jew felt he was not only part of a lateral family of contemporaries

. . . but a vertical family stretching back into history and forward into time."

Marriage was considered a religious and social duty. Therefore marriage was arranged by the parents and children were expected to marry young. The importance of pleasure in marriage and procreation was emphasized by the regulation in Deuteronomy 24:5 which states "when a man takes a new wife he shall not go out with the army, nor shall he be charged with any business. He shall be free at home one year, and shall enjoy the wife whom he has taken."

Excluded from the society at large during the European middle ages, the Jewish community developed its own social, political and economic life "through the organization of the synagogue . . . the family unit was given a definite status based not so much on wealth as on learning, piety, purity of family life and services rendered to the community."

The whole of family life was pervaded by religion and it was in the home that religion was lived each day. Ceremonies, such as the special Sabbath, and festive rites celebrated within the family as well as dietary laws regularly reaffirmed loyalty to the Jewish faith. Jewish identity through the ages has been strengthened by loyalty to the Jewish faith, developed and maintained within the family.

Hinduism

Family life is and has always been of paramount importance in Hinduism. One's duties toward the family and society express respect for God. Historically in extended family systems, children, parents,

grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins lived in proximity, helped each other and made decisions bearing upon one another's needs. Recently, urbanization has reduced the formal extended family system.

Marriage was considered a religious duty and the birth of children ensured happiness even in the next world. Marriage was regarded in Vedic texts as the union of man and woman indissoluble except by death. The most important religious acts were performed within the home where a person's life was hedged with sacraments accompanying him or her from cradle to grave.

Some of the earliest texts dealing with Hindu law made a distinction between religious and civil marriage although in orthodox Hinduism all marriage is religious. For a millennium four stages of life found in the Laws of Manu provided a framework for Hindus to live their lives. Once a man completed his training and married, he entered the second stage, that of householder or grhastha. His life was spent in the pursuit of the "Three Aims"--religion, merits and pleasure. The third stage, that of the hermit, commenced when a man's hair began to turn grey and he saw his children's children. Then accompanied by his wife he resided in a hut in the forest to devote his life to penance and religious exercise for the welfare of his soul. In the fourth, most rigorous and final stage, the ideal Hindu surrendered his worldly attachments and wandered as a penniless beggar awaiting death.

Excerpts for the general pattern of the social order for the householder according to the Laws of Manu were as follows,

The student, the householder, the hermit, and the ascetic, these (constitute) four separate orders . . .

And in accordance with the precepts of the Veda and of the traditional texts, the housekeeper [householder] is declared to be superior to all of them [the other three orders]; for he supports the other three.

As all rivers, both great and small, find a restingplace in the ocean, even so men of all orders find protection with householders.

Having bathed, with the permission of his teacher, and performed according to the rule the rite on returning home, a twice-born man shall marry a wife of equal caste who is endowed with auspicious (bodily) marks.

A brahmin must seek a means of subsistence which either causes no, or at least little pain (to others), and live (by that) except in times of distress.

(Living) according to the (preceding) rules, he must never neglect the five (great) sacrifices, and, having taken a wife, he must dwell in (his own) house during the second period of his life.

Let him never, for the sake of subsistence, follow the ways of the world; let him live the pure, straightforward, honest life of a brahmin.

He who desires happiness must strive after a perfectly contented disposition and control himself; for happiness has contentment for its root, the root of unhappiness is the contrary (disposition).

Religion influenced the Hindu family in a variety of ways.

Puranas or ancient stories, and the epics--the Ramayana and Mahabharata, defined the status of women in relation to men. The ideal of a pativrata, a woman devoted to her husband's service was rooted in the puranic stories. Children were raised on these stories and learned their respective roles at an early age.

Religion influenced family life through rites and regulations laid down for each caste. The rites included name-giving, marriage, death rites and funerals. Other rites and codes affected dress, food, observances, celebrations and worship.

Hindu marriage marks the beginning of a responsible and purposeful life. The sacrament of marriage and caste restrictions which may govern marriage assume a perfect biological, psychological, moral and spiritual harmony between husband and wife. Loyalty and devotion govern the couple's relationship to each other until death. Children assure the continuation of the family line and provide the basis for the most fundamental of Hindu social institutions; a community of blood held together by bonds of mutual respect, devotion and love.

PARENTS' RIGHTS AND DUTIES

When parents bring a child into the world they participate in God's creative power and with this power they are charged with certain obligations and rights.

Various religions place different emphasis on the importance of duties and rights. The responsibilities of parenthood include: provision for the children's physical and emotional security, the transfer of social values which enable children to be full participating members of their society, the opportunity for the development of life skills so that children may achieve their adult potential, the transfer of spiritual values including morality, ethics and religion, and the teaching of kinship identity and obligations. Parental authority and rights are based upon children's dependence and parents have the right to expect from children respect, obedience and care.

Physical and Emotional Security

Parents, as far as they are able, are obliged to provide their children with food, shelter and clothing. Further, parents have an obligation to secure their children from harm. Under the patriarchal nature of Islamic law "the father is obliged to maintain, train and discipline his children and they are obliged to be obedient to him and to defer to his judgements." Francis Schaeffer in his book, No Little People, described parental responsibility for the security of their children as akin to a personal relationship with God. He wrote:

Why does the boy hiking with his father reach out his hand when they come to a slippery place? He does it because in the past his father has faithfully taken his outstretched hand as they have walked over the slippery trails together. This portrays the Christian walk with God, and the picture is beautiful. I raise my hand to my Father in personal relationship, and then walk with Him hand in hand.

Socialization--Transfer of Social Values

Every child born into a society is taught the norms and values by which the society maintains itself. Traditionally, the family has been responsible for educating its children to become participating members of their society. Through the complexity of the modern world the function of socialization is now shared with schools, churches and other institutions although the first place a child learns to accept the boundaries of social conformity is within the family. The following extract describes how Amish children are taught to cherish their differences.

Amish children appear innocent and unspoiled by the things of this world. The birth of a child brings joy to the

family and community, for there will be another dishwasher or wood chopper, and another church member. Thus children are wanted. At no time in the Amish system are they unwelcome, for they are regarded as "An heritage of the Lord."

The first two years of life are undoubtedly the happiest. Baby obtains what he wants. He is given permissive care with great amounts of love from mother, father, brothers, sisters, uncles, grandfathers, grandmothers, and cousins.

After about the second year, restrictions and exacting disciplines are continuously imposed upon the child until well into adolescence. He must be taught to respect the authority of his parents and to respond properly to their exactness. The child is considered sinless since he does not know the difference between right and wrong. It is the duty of parents to teach him this difference, so that he will realize his moral inadequacy and choose the "right way" of the Amish religion. . . .

The faces of many Amish boys and girls reflect pure intent, a sincere, honest, cordial, and well-bred disposition. The extraordinary love and discipline they get prepares them well for Amish womanhood and manhood.

The socialization of children within Hutterite communities has been traditionally divided between the family and various structures within the community. Peter Rideman, the great Hutterite organizer wrote in 1565 concerning the training of children.

Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in nurture and admonition of the Lord. For this reason is our education of children such as we permit them not to carry out their headstrong will and carnal practise.

Education

Every opportunity for children to acquire necessary life skills enabling them to be productive members within their society is a parental responsibility. The following excerpt from 'Abdu'l-Baha presents a Baha'i position on the importance of education.

. . . in this New Cycle, education and training are recorded in the Book of God as obligatory and not voluntary. That is, it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son, to nurse them from the breast of knowledge and to rear them in the bosom of sciences and arts . . . they must strive by all possible means to educate both sexes, male and female . . . if it be considered through the eye of reality, the training and culture of daughters is more necessary than that of sons, for these girls will come to the station of motherhood and will mold the lives of the children. The first trainer of the child is the mother. . . .

Islam recognizes the necessity for combining secular and religious education, as demonstrated in the following extracts:

The teacher's faith in God is his invaluable asset. It is his binding duty to inculcate the love of God in the hearts of his pupils, as an inexhaustible source of nobility of character.

--Teachers' Charter of Honour,
Egyptian Teachers Syndicate

One of the boys at the Mullah's school asked a trick question: What is man's greatest achievement? "I don't know about all that," said the Mullah, "but I do know a more difficult task than any--trying to teach you to see things as they really are."
--Idries Shah

We must find again the unprejudiced and receptive mind of the early days of Islam, so that we are capable of meeting the fast-changing challenges of the time and contributing fully to the enrichment of the heritage of mankind as a whole.

--Mohammed Wahby

Religious Education

One parental obligation which receives more attention from religions than any other is the duty of parents to teach children their spiritual dimension. The Jewish creed begins: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One," and continues:

. . . And these words which I command thee this day shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

On the education of children, Bahau'llah is quoted in Baha'i Education: A Compilation,

It is the bounden duty of parents to rear their children to be staunch in faith, the reason being that a child who removeth himself from the religion of God will not act in such a way as to win the good pleasure of his parents and his Lord. For every praiseworthy deed is born out of the light of religion, and lacking this supreme bestowal the child will not turn away from any evil, nor will he draw nigh unto any good.

The Mormon position on the importance of the family's obligation for the spiritual education of children is reflected in their "family evening" dedicated to enhancing family spiritual understanding. The following is from a Mormon guide book, Family Home Evening.

Parents are responsible for helping their children understand and live the Lord's moral standard. They should teach their children this standard so well that they can clearly recognize and avoid evil.

Parents can successfully teach virtue to children only if they set the proper example: "Be thou an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). In order to be an example in word and conversation, parents must themselves have pure thoughts. Our thoughts dictate our words and actions, which ultimately shape our character.

A gospel-centered home is a place where family members learn to love the gospel and to worthily participate in priesthood ordinances. It is a place where they grow in faith in God and in their love for him, for his restored gospel, and for one another. The Spirit of the Lord resides there.

The father is the divinely appointed head of the home; and the mother, as copartner, presides in his absence. Father

and mother counsel together, nurturing their children and teaching them to center their lives on Christ and his gospel.

The Lord has admonished us, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119). Perhaps nothing draws families closer to each other and to their Heavenly Father than individual and family prayer.

The need for honesty in religious education, found in the Quaker faith, is expressed in the following advice.

Parents should not shirk the duty of helping their children to have a right idea of God, and to grow up into a living experience of His power and love. Some will feel acutely the weakness of their own religious experience, and the dangers of suggesting crude beliefs that will afterwards have to be unlearned. We must never introduce ideas of God that are inconsistent with His perfect love. The essential truths are simple. The scriptural figures of the Father and the Good Shepherd are easily understood by children and will not need to be outgrown.

The views of the Roman Catholic Church regarding parental duties to provide for the spiritual welfare of their children are expressed in the following extract from Sacramentum Mundi, An Encyclopedia of Theology.

But parents have a duty, above all, to educate their children to the best of their ability and to look after their spiritual welfare for the proper development of the children's personality is the foremost work of care and love and the parents are, because of their status, the immediate representatives of God to their children, though of course analogously. Parents are absolutely bound to provide education and formation, making the best of their children's capabilities and their own opportunities. They must protect their children from moral dangers with which they could not be expected to cope themselves because of their immaturity. They must foster

their ability to make moral decisions and support them in the good they do. Hence the right balance must be found in giving children protection and allowing them to fend for themselves.

... A special duty in this connection is that of providing religious education. This is because the child is ordained to religion as to the highest fulfilment of man. It is not enough to confront the child with religious problems when he is of an age to make his own decisions, since psychological reasons and God's claim to our religious allegiance demand that religious education must start as early as possible. In any case religious problems and influences cannot be kept from the children.

Finally, the parents' duty to bring up children is balanced by their right to do so and they can decide on the form and content of their education according to the opportunities available. Only in this way can they do what their conscience demands of them. It follows that, to safeguard their basic rights, parents should be associated as far as possible with educational work which they cannot carry out themselves, such as school education. Educational tasks which are beyond parental scope must always be carried out with the rights of the parents in mind. It is therefore a parental right that any task not delegated by the parents but stemming directly from functions proper to Church or State, should be carried out as far as possible with parental co-operation.

In particular one must remember that the less mature the children are, the more must religion be integrated in their general education, if it is to be at all effective, for the younger the child, the more dependent will it be on an integrated approach. And the older the child is, the more directly must it be led to a personal decision of faith by the discussion of other convictions. From the positive point of view, parents have a right to determine their children's religious education because they brought their children into the world and are therefore responsible for them, a responsibility of which they cannot be relieved by either Church or State, whose responsibilities are limited to their own specific spheres.

Kinship Identity and Family Obligations

Children learn to identify who they are through the affection and love of their family. Bernie Wiebe has described the importance of family affection to Mennonites.

Learning how to show and receive affection is today possibly the primary function of the home. Most things can be learned from specialists, but the art of affection is still best learned from experience.

"Jen," the highest ethical goal for humanity in Confucian philosophy, is achieved through family interaction as described in the following passage,

The importance of the family is specifically for the sake of realizing the individual, that is, for the fulfillment the seed of jen possessed by every individual. This seed of jen comes directly from the family. We all get our humanity originally from the family. Since we all get our lives from our parents and grow up in the family, the cultivation and development of our humanity must begin within the family. But how do we cultivate and develop our humanity within the family? Individuals should do their duty to the family. The two important duties of the individual to the family are filial piety (hsiao) and brotherliness (ti).

Filial piety and brotherliness are moral principles which teach men to love and respect their own parents and elder brothers. These principles were based upon the seed of humanity inborn in all men in loving their parents, and were intended to preserve and develop it by ethical education. Confucius considered the rudimentary instinct of loving one's parents as the root of jen. Without cultivation, it may wither away or disappear. In order to cultivate and develop such a root of jen, Confucius taught the doctrine of filial piety and brotherliness in the family. So, in The Analects it is said, "Filial piety and brotherliness--are they not the root of jen?" For the practice of jen, filial piety and brotherliness should be practiced first. The reason is obvious. If a man does not love his own parents, can he be a man of jen? And, if a man has the duty to love men, whom should he love first? Is it not his own parents? The doctrine of filial piety and brotherliness is intended to teach men to love and respect their own parents and brothers first, and then extend their love and respect to the parents and brothers of others. This is the way to cultivate and develop one's own humanity. It is a way to educate men in the family, in order that they can develop and realize their true selves. What is important is individuals in the family and not the family as such.

As a matter of fact, Confucian ethics considered the

individual and the family equally important and mutually dependent. Individuals cannot be separated from the family. The development of an individual's humanity must begin in and with the family. Without the family, or in neglect of the family, one's jen, or humanity, is rootless. Can those who do not love their own parents love other men? The importance of the family lies here. On the other hand, the family can be regulated only through the development of the individual. Without the development of the individual, the family cannot be regulated. Herein lies the importance of the individual.

Just as Confucian ethics asserted the mutual dependence of the individual and the family, it also asserted the mutual dependence of the individual and the state and the whole of mankind.

Filial responsibility is part of the kinship identity children achieve through their families. The basis of parents' rights to be honoured and cared for by grown sons and daughters arises from the care parents gave their children. In Judaic tradition this includes a child's duty to honour and respect parents and provide them with status of distinction and dignity. The following description of the Amish regard for kinship is similar to Oriental kinship ties.

Respect for the aged, already obvious among youth, is even more pronounced with regard to mature Amish people. The individual never outgrows the command to obey his parents. The command is binding not until parents die, but even after they are gone. All age groups in both sexes revere parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. The duty to obey one's parents is one of the main themes in Amish preaching. Perhaps the verse most often repeated on this point is one of the Ten Commandments: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."
--Exodus 20:12.

Not only is there respect for the aged, but authority is vested in the old people. This arrangement naturally lends itself to increased control of life by the aged. Preservation of the religious ideals and more is thereby insured, and the younger people who are inclined to introduce change can be held in check.

A strong consciousness of kinship is peculiarly favorable

to gerontocracy, or social control by the older members of society. As in the ideal type of the little community, this control is informal rather than formal or obvious, but nevertheless, closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands or feet. The part which old people have in drawing forth and molding the character and life-policy of every younger person in the kinship group makes the necessity for direct control much less frequent in isolated culture than in more accessible communities. The relatively integrated community is associated with effective rules imposed by the aged, be they parents or church leaders. Thus deference to age pervades not only familial relationships, but also the religious leadership of the group. Furthermore, the counsel of the older bishop or minister carries more authority than that of younger ones.

The Amish consider their practice as merely a continuation of the old Hebrew attitude. For them, the Hebrew system provides a rational explanation. "The hoary head is a crown of glory . . . the beauty of the old men is the hoary head. A wise son heareth his father's instruction. Harken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man. . . . Honor thy father and thy mother, . . . and he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. I said days shall speak and a multitude of years shall teach wisdom."

Death, a natural part of the human life cycle is faced most fearlessly when family ties are strong. Karl Peter, in The Hutterite Family, explains Hutterite respect for the aged members of their community,

The aged are respected in the Hutterite communities and their advice is valued. The last years of a Hutterite are usually spent by being part of a son's or grandson's family. While the community takes excellent care of the aged in terms of health services, food, housing and clothing, the family of immediate relatives provides the close emotional and personal ties so greatly satisfying to Hutterites. Death is regarded as natural and usually comes without fear.

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CONCLUSION

To stimulate dialogue between religious groups and individuals and to evaluate the accuracy of this document a preliminary draft was sent to various religious leaders and laypersons in the community. Some religious representatives thought the study would have been better if each religious perspective was isolated within each theme. For ease of reading a comparative table of religious beliefs was suggested. It was brought to our attention that some religious groups do not use scripture as an authority; the members decide what makes sense to their own lives as discovered in their own experience. Some respondents felt the sources of major religions were under-represented while the minor groups were over-represented. One reviewer pointed out that we must not assume that the minority faiths in our community are aware of the beliefs of major religions and that a balance should be achieved between them. The historical and literary sources were considered by a few to be irrelevant to modern family life and stronger reliance on sociology would have created a more relevant document. Many people have commented and given suggestions on further uses for this report and annotated bibliography. Family counsellors have suggested the variety and depth of religious information could be a useful resource. Educators have commented it would be useful for multicultural education as well as for religious study groups because the open-ended framework allows individuals or groups to see the similarities they share with others.

Religions display a variety of perspectives on themes pertaining to marriage and family. Religions and society are shown to be intrinsically connected as religious guidance gives special strength to individuals and families. The variety of religions in Canada and British Columbia reflect our multicultural mosaic. Variety and complexity should bring us together in an on-going dialogue in which we learn to understand our similarities and appreciate our differences. Common bonds among religious traditions about marriage and family is an area of study which has not been actively pursued. Its value lies in its ability to educate ourselves that behind the vast cultural and religious differences people share some essential truths about their existence.

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